

The SPD's "Germany Plan"—social democracy shifts further to the right

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On Sunday evening, the leader and chancellor candidate for the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Martin Schulz, presented his so-called Future plan for a modern Germany at the party's headquarters in Berlin. Behind all the party's talk of "securing the future", "innovation", "civil society" and "securing peace", the SPD is shifting even further to the right.

When Schulz announced an "election campaign based on social justice" several months ago, nobody took him seriously. Everyone knows the SPD has been part of government for 15 of the past 20 years. It is above all the SPD that is responsible for massive social, wage and pension cuts, and the subsequent social misery. The SPD is associated with the anti-social Hartz IV measures and duly despised.

The vast majority of workers have met Schulz's rhetoric of social justice with growing hostility. The SPD suffered one electoral defeat after another in the last three state elections (Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein, North Rhine Westphalia). The party has responded to this series of electoral snubs with a further lurch to the right, in two key regards.

In domestic policy, the SPD has adopted the "Agenda" policies of former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and is preparing a new round of massive social cuts. This is behind the catchphrase "Innovation alliance for German industry", which is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of German companies.

In foreign policy, the party is calling for greater independence from the US and has explicitly stated its aim of taking "the path to a European army".

Schulz has gone so far as to adopt the slogan of former Chancellor Schröder's Agenda campaign "Innovation and Justice", with which the SPD wreaked social havoc 20 years ago. Germany is a "country of entrepreneurship" and must remain so, the SPD writes.

This requires an "active industrial policy" and above all increased competitiveness, support for small businesses and the craft sector.

In the programme's section "Work and life in a digitised society", the SPD promises "more self-determination in the world of work". In fact, the same phase has been used for years to justify deregulation at the workplace. "More self-determination" are code words for the abolition of all forms of social security and the creation of precarious work. Workers are quite aware of this, and have only contempt and anger for the social-democratic wall of lies.

The SPD's announcement that state administrations should be modernised and digitised is the prelude to massive job cuts in the public sector and the intensification of exploitation at the workplace.

This "Agenda 2020" is aimed at drastically intensifying exploitation to further increase corporate profits. It goes together with an aggressive foreign policy. The SPD presents itself as the party that can enforce the new great power policy of German imperialism in a more effective and consistent manner than the conservative parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU).

The "Germany Plan" includes a demand for a massive military rearmament. The programme section headed "Against a new spiral of re-armament—for disarmament" unashamedly includes the demand: "The Bundeswehr needs more money to carry out its tasks". The criticism made in the section of NATO's "two-percent target" has nothing to do with "disarmament". The SPD simply wants to ensure that its plans for rearmament serve the imperialist interests of Germany, and not those of the US. To achieve these goals worldwide, the "Germany Plan" calls for the setting up of a European army under German leadership.

The benchmark used is the military power of the US. “The efficiency of defence spending in Europe is just 15% of the US,” the SPD writes. “The army requires more money in order to fulfill its tasks,” the plan explicitly states. To ensure that this military build-up serves German imperialist interests, it is necessary to clarify within Europe and NATO, “what defence spending is being used for and for what purpose. This includes the consolidation of the armaments industry within the framework of a European defence organisation.” The SPD will “take the path to a European army.”

Following the skirmishes that took place on the outskirts of the G20 summit in Hamburg, the SPD has openly appealed to the militarist layers attracted to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Leading SPD personnel are attacking Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and the conservative parties from the right, aggressively defending the police and stoking up crude nationalism.

Justice Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) has demanded the establishment of a European extremist file for left-wing radicals and has called for a “rock vs. the left” pop concert. The SPD executive has introduced the term “protest terrorism” to criminalise growing resistance to the country’s increasingly reactionary and militarist policies. As for Schulz, he begins his “Germany Plan” with the sentence, “Germany is a great country. But Germany can do more”. This inevitably recalls the slogans of the extreme right for “Pride in Germany” and “Germany First”.

The more resistance emerges to the prevailing anti-social policies and military rearmament, the more the SPD moves to the right. It presents itself as the official party of German imperialism and recalls that it was, above all, the SPD that defended bourgeois rule in crisis situations in the past century and did not hesitate to deal violently with the working class.

The Socialist Equality Party (*Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei*, SGP) vehemently opposes the SPD and its right-wing policies. The main “opposition” parties—the Left Party and Greens—support SPD policy and have set their sights on a so-called red-red-green government coalition. The SGP is the only party to participate in this autumn’s federal election on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme opposing war and social inequality and defending

democratic rights.

We call on all those opposed to the return of German militarism, growing poverty and the growth of the far right to support the SGP and its election campaign. Join the SGP! Now is the time to actively participate in the construction of a new mass socialist party!



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